

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LUANDA 00157 01 OF 02 070921Z

11

ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 PM-03 SP-02 L-01 INR-05

NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 /044 W

----- 065053

R 070725Z FEB 75

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3246

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LUANDA 0157

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINS PINT AO

SUBJECT: THE POSSIBILITY OF CIVIL WAR IN ANGOLA DURING THE TRANS-
ITIONAL PERIOD AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH STILL ISOLATED AND NOT YET
SELF-SUSTAINING, RECENT OUTBREAKS OF PHYSICAL AND VERBAL
CONFLICT BETWEEN MPLA AND FNLA RAISE THE SPECTRE OF AN
ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR. THE INCIDENTS CAN PERHAPS BE CHALKED UP
TO THE NATURAL AND EXPECTED STRAINS INHERENT IN TRI-PARTY
COOPERATION, BUT THEIR OCCURENCE IN A SITUATION WHERE EACH
GROUP IS WELL ARMED AND POSSESSES A LONG HISTORY OF VIOLENT
ANIMOSITY TOWARDS THE OTHERS RENDERS THEM SIGNIFICANTLY
MORE OMINOUS. WE BELIEVE THERE IS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY OF
A CIVIL WAR OR THE THREAT OF THE USE OF FORCE BEFORE INDEPENDENCE.
IF WAR OCCURS AND IF FNLA ATTEMPTS TO COERCE MPLA, FNLA WILL
EMERGE VICTORIOUS IN THE NORTH WITH OR WITHOUT THE COLLABORATION
OF UNITA. END SUMMARY

2. AN ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR WOULD MOST LIKELY DEVELOP IN ONE OF
THREE DISTINCT BUT NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE WAYS: A) MISADVENTURE
(I.E. AN INCIDENT PROVOKING UNCONTROLLABLY ESCALATING
VIOLENCE), B) A CALCULATED FNLA PUTSCH OR C) FROM A
DESPERATION COUP ATTEMPT BY AN MPLA WHICH FEELS ITS POLITICAL
POPULARITY SLIPPING.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 LUANDA 00157 01 OF 02 070921Z

3. IN THE PESENT ENVIRONMENT OF FIVE (INCLUDING CHIPENDA) CO-

EXISTING ARMED GROUPS, EXPLOSIVE INCIDENTS ARE NOT ONLY LIKELY, BUT INEVITABLE. IN THE ABSENCE OF ACTIVE PLANS BY ONE OR ANOTHER GROUP TO EXPLOIT AN INCIDENT, HOWEVER, THE GREATEST DANGER ARISES NOT FROM CASUALTY BUT FROM PLANNED VIOLENCE. PLAUSIBLE IN THIS CONTEXT WOULD BE AN FNLA ATTEMPT TO PROFIT FROM ITS PRESENT COMMANDING MILITARY PREDOMINANCE BEFORE THE PLANNED MPLA AND UNITA MILITARY BUILD-UP ERODES THAT SUPERIORITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, A FACTOR ACTING TO DISCOURAGE OR DELAY AN FNLA ARMED POWER GRAB IS THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY PRESENCE, TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED TO DECLINE IN THE LAST MONTHS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE. WE ASSUME THAT FNLA'S CALCULUS WOULD TRY TO IDENTIFY A POINT IN TIME THAT IS BOTH BEFORE ITS RELATIVE MILITARY STRENGTH DECLINES TO THE DANGER POINT (AS THE OTHER GROUPS INCREASE THEIR ARMED MANPOWER) BUT AFTER PORTUGUESE TROOP STRENGTH HAS DECLINED BELOW THAT PERCEIVED AS THE CRITICAL POINT.

4. THE TEMPTATION TO FNLA TO ATTEMPT A MILITARY COUP IS SIGNIFICANTLY REINFORCED BY ITS RELATIVELY WEAK POLITICAL POSITION. POTENTIALLY OUTVOTED BY A POPULOUS PRO-SAVIMBI (AND ANTI-BAKONGO) SOUTH AND POSSESSING LESS NUMEROUS SOPHISTICATED CADRE THAN MPLA, A MILITARY SOLUTION MUST HOLD SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST FOR FNLA. FNLA COULD REASONABLY EXPECT TO SECURE ANGOLA NORTH OF THE CUANZA, INCLUDING LUANDA. IT LACKS ANY HOPE (OR PROBABLY EVEN INTENTION) OF CONTROLLING THE SOUTH. THIS TENDENCY TOWARDS A MILITARY COUP IS SUPPORTED BY THE DEEP IDEOLOGICAL, STYLISTIC, PERSONAL, TRIBAL AND POWER BASE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FNLA AND MPLA, ALL OF WHICH COMBINE, IN THE VIEW OF MANY LOCAL OBSERVERS, TO RULE OUT MEANINGFUL COOPERATION WITH MPLA BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER INDEPENDENCE. WE JUDGE THE PROBABILITY OF A FNLA COUP ATTEMPT TO BE MOST LIKELY AFTER INDEPENDENCE, BUT A PRE-INDEPENDENCE STRIKE IS CONCEIVABLE, PROBABLY JUST BEFORE ELECTIONS.

5. FAR LESS PROBABLE, BUT IF IT HAPPENS MORE COSTLY IN HUMAN LIVES, WOULD BE MPLA PROVOKING AN INCIDENT AND CONCURRENTLY ISSUING ARMS (WHICH IT REPORTEDLY HAS) TO ITS LUANDA SUPPORTERS. WHILE AN FNLA COUP COULD CONCEIVABLY BE ACCOMPLISHED MAINLY BY THREAT AND WITH RELATIVELY LIGHT CASUALTIES, AN MPLA GAMBLE, WHETHER SUCCESSFUL OR NOT, WOULD BE A BLOODY PITTING OF UNTRAINED MPLA CIVILIAN SUPPORTERS AGAINST FNLA SOLDIERS. ALSO, EVEN IF SUCCESSFUL IN LUANDA, A MPLA COUP WOULD

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 LUANDA 00157 01 OF 02 070921Z

STILL LEAVE FNLA IN CONTROL OF THE RURAL NORTH AND UNITA THE SOUTH. SUCH A MOVE BY MPLA MUST BE CONSIDERED ONE OF EXTREME DESPERATION. IT WOULD BE HIGHLY LIKELY TO FAIL EVEN IN ITS LIMITED OBJECTIVE OF SECURING LUANDA.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 LUANDA 00157 02 OF 02 070942Z

20

ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 EUR-08 PM-03 SP-02 L-01 INR-05

NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 /044 W

----- 065220

R 070725Z FEB 75

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3247

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 LUANDA 0157

6. UNITA'S ROLE. IN THE EVENT OF AN ARMED SHOWDOWN BETWEEN MPLA AND FNLA, UNITA HAS TWO BASIC OPTIONS: SIDE WITH ONE OF THE TWO - PROBABLY FNLA - OR WITHDRAW TO ITS POWER BASE SOUTH OF THE CUANZA RIVER AND WAIT TO PICK UP THE PIECES. UNITA CASTING ITS LOT WITH ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER WOULD MAKE LITTLE PRACTICAL DIFFERENCE IN LUANDA, THE ONLY POINT WHERE THE OUTCOME WOULD BE AT ALL IN DOUBT. GIVEN SAVIMBI'S CAREFULLY-CONSTRUCTED IMAGE AS THE PRINCIPAL PROPONENT OF INTER-GROUP UNITY AS WELL AS THE PRACTICAL FACT THAT HE CANNOT BRING EFFECTIVE POWER TO BEAR IN LUANDA, HE WOULD PROBABLY OPT TO SIT OUT AT LEAST THE INITIAL ARMED CONFRONTATION AND CONTINUE TO BUILD ON HIS SOUTHERN POWER BASE. IF ROBERTO SUCCEEDS, SAVIMBI WOULD PROBABLY BE WILLING TO JOIN HIM AS A JUNIOR PARTNER AS LONG AS ROBERTO DID NOT ATTEMPT TO INTRUDE ON UNITA'S TERRITORY.

7. U.S. POLICY INTERESTS. ALTHOUGH NOT FORMALLY STATED IN A COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER, WE ASSUME THAT ONE OF OUR PRIMARY ANGOLAN POLICY GOALS IS THE AVOIDANCE OF A CIVIL WAR WHICH COULD BRING REQUESTS FOR U.S. INVOLVEMENT, ENDANGER GULF'S CABINDA INVESTMENT, CREATE SEVERE TENSIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA, DESTABILIZE THE ENTIRE REGION, AND DEPRIVE US OF CONTINUED REFUELING FACILITIES IN ANGOLA FOR USN VESSELS.

8. THE POSSIBILITY OF CIVIL WAR WARRANTS CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE STEPS AIMED AT REDUCING THE RISKS. IN THIS REGARD THE ONLY TOOL WE APPEAR TO POSSESS IS THE OPTION OF AN APPROACH TO MOBUTU URGING HIM TO RESTRAIN ROBERTO. BUT IF THAT STEP APPEARS FRUITLESS AND A FNLA COUP INCREASINGLY LIKELY, WE WOULD GAIN MOST

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 LUANDA 00157 02 OF 02 070942Z

BY NOT MAKING THE APPROACH OR, IF INITIALLY MADE, BY REFRAINING FROM FURTHER SERIOUS ATTEMPTS TO DISCOURAGE FNLA. SUPPORT FOR ROBERTO AND SAVIMBI COULD PLACE US IN A BETTER POSITION TO PROTECT OUR INTERESTS ONCE THE DUST HAD SETTLED. ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO CONFIDENTLY PREDICT THE POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF A FUTURE FNLA AND/OR UNITA GOVERNMENT, WE FEEL THEY WILL PROVE MUCH LESS HOSTILE TO U.S. INTERESTS THAN THOSE OF AN MPLA-CONTROLLED REGIME.

9. IN SUBSEQUENT MESSAGES, WE WILL EXPLORE PROSPECTS FOR STABILITY AND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ANGOLA'S POWER STRUGGLE, DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF A PARTITION AND EXPLORE THE CABINDAN QUESTION.

KILLORAN

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LUANDA00157
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750045-0400
From: LUANDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750263/aaaaceiz.tel
Line Count: 185
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <08 DEC 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE POSSIBILITY OF CIVIL WAR IN ANGOLA DURING THE TRANS- ITIONAL PERIOD AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, AO, FNLA, MPLA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006